Increase in Haj quota

†2934. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to increase the Haj quota;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government are contemplating to increase the Haj quota this year as lots of people are deprived of Haj Pilgrimage due to inadequate quota despite submitting applications every year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) The quota for each country for Haj is fixed by the Government of Saudi Arabia on the basis of certain criteria and India has been allocated a quota of 1,47,000 pilgrims for Haj 2006 II. Haj Committee of India has been allotted pilgrim quota of 1,00,000 and private tour operators 47,000.

(c) As the total number of pilgrims for each country is set by Saudi Authorities, it is not possible for the Government to increase the quota. However, a request has been made to Saudi Authorities for increase of Haj quota for Indian pilgrims by 10,000 for Haj 2006 II *i.e.* to raise it to a total of 1,57,000 pilgrims.

Import of arms by Sri Lanka from Pakistan

2935. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sri Lankan Government have imported arms and ammunition from Pakistan to use against the Tamils and LTTE in Sri Lanka;

(b) the background of the present attack between Sri Lankan Army and LTTE and what could be the loss of lives of Tamils and LTTE on the one side and Sri Lankan Army and Sri Lankans on the other during the attack and encounter; and

(c) the initiatives taken by Government of India to prevent the killings of Tamils in Sri Lanka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir. Government of Sri Lanka sources its defence supplies from various countries.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) There are on-going hostilities between the LTTE on the one hand and Sri Lankan armed forces on the other. While there are reports of casualities on both sides, the exact number is difficult to ascertain.

(c) While reaffirming commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, Government of India has emphasized the need to make all possible efforts to strengthen the ceasefire and to revive the political dialogue in order to move the peace process forward. Government of India has also conveyed to Government of Sri Lanka that any escalation of violence will not only undermine the ceasefire but also result in civilian casualties.

Racial discrimination against Indians in U.S.

2936. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in U.S. the Non-whites particularly Indians are very often stopped and searched by police on the pretext of traffic violations and whether it is more so after the recent Mumbai blast by the terrorists; and

(b) the measures taken by Government of India to arrange for mitigation of harassment and sufferings of Indian on the one side and the discrimination on the other?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Raising of Kashmir issue

2937. Shrimati. SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan continued to raise the Kashmir issue on all international forums;

(b) whether Pakistan and Indian officials met at SAARC Foreign Ministers meeting in Dhaka on July 31st and the issue of continuing peace talks was also discussed;

(c) if so, whether any date for continuation of foreign secretary level talks was considered;